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Published September 27, 2006

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## Doctor: Lisa Holland was a loving mother

Midday update

By Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

A Jackson physician who treated Ricky Holland for about a year-and-a-half testified today Lisa Holland seemed to be a loving mother and that he never suspected the boy was being abused.

Dr. Jon Lake began treating Ricky in January 2001. He also testified it was unusual that he would not see a child of Ricky's age on a regular basis after the last visit in September 2002.

Lisa Holland is charged with murder and child abuse in the death of her 7-year-old adopted son, Ricky. Her husband, Tim Holland, has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and is expected to testify against her.

Prosecutors have said Ricky was abused and not taken regularly to a doctor.

For more on this story, check back to [www.lsj.com](http://www.lsj.com).

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Published September 28, 2006

## Physician says he last saw Ricky in 2002

Jackson doctor says Lisa often called his office

By Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

A new portrait of Lisa Holland emerged in court Wednesday: A loving mother who frequently called her family physician with child-rearing questions.

But testimony also revealed that the doctor last saw Lisa's adopted son Ricky on Sept. 20, 2002 - although he treated other family members until 2005 - and that no records show Ricky ever went to another physician.

Lisa Holland is charged with murder and child abuse in 7-year-old Ricky's death in July 2005. Her husband, Tim Holland, has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and is expected to testify against her.

Dr. Jon Lake, who treated Ricky from January 2001 to September 2002 when the Hollands lived in Jackson, said Lisa often called his office.

"They were routine care questions," he said, about sleeping and eating problems, fevers and Tylenol dosages.

Lake said he never suspected abuse.

Lake also testified it was unusual that he did not see Ricky after the September 2002 visit. Lake said no request was made for Ricky's records to be forwarded to another doctor.

Ricky, however, continued to see a child psychiatrist until July 2004, according to earlier testimony.

That psychiatrist, Dr. Aurif Abedi - who diagnosed Ricky with several conditions, including attention-deficit (hyperactivity) disorder and bipolar mood disorder - is expected to testify today.

Lake said he referred Ricky to Dr. Abedi because Lisa Holland told him the boy was difficult to control at home.

Also Wednesday, Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Frank Mraz described the January day when Tim Holland led investigators to the spot in a marshlike area near Dansville where he had

### What's next

- Lisa Holland's trial continues today before Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield. Ricky's Jackson psychiatrist is expected to testify. Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Frank Mraz is expected to complete his testimony as well.

New witness?

- Investigators have interviewed a witness in Florida who could be relevant to the case against Lisa Holland. Prosecutors have not yet said if that evidence will be presented during the trial.

dumped Ricky's remains.

Mraz testified that as Tim Holland slowly walked toward the scene, about 15 to 20 feet from Williamston Road, he started to weep, fell to his knees and said, "Oh, my God, what have I done? What have I done?"

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or [kgrasha@lsj.com](mailto:kgrasha@lsj.com).

### **Trial recap**

Week 1, Sept. 18-22:

In opening arguments, prosecutors say the case against Lisa Holland is about manipulation, deception and concealment. Defense attorneys counter that the prosecution's key witness, Tim Holland, is not credible and his guilty plea was intended solely to protect himself.

A Jackson County social worker testifies that in February 2001, Ricky said Lisa Holland tied him up at night. The social worker filed a report with Child Protective Services, but the report was not substantiated.

Jackson school officials testify the Ricky they knew was not the same boy described and often disparaged by Lisa Holland.

Testimony also reveals Ricky was removed from elementary school after it was determined he did not qualify for the special education services Lisa wanted.

This week:

- Day 6, Monday: Investigators found tiny blood stains in several rooms of Tim and Lisa Holland's Williamston home, a state police forensic scientist testifies. The forensic scientist says the blood is evidence of injury. "It's not typical to find blood stains all over the place like that," he says.
- Day 7, Tuesday: No testimony

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# Girl's fatal head injury angers grandparents

## Canton officers probing incident at a foster home

**BY JACK KRESNAK**

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

*September 28, 2006*

Despite living in a stranger's foster home, 2-year-old Allison Newman was "happy-go-lucky, full of life and cheerful," Allison's grandmother said Wednesday.

"Every picture that we've ever seen, she's looked happy," said Debbie Newman of Westland.

Debbie and her husband, Ken Newman, said they were shocked and then angered when they learned that their granddaughter died Saturday after sustaining a head injury in a state-licensed foster home in Canton.

Police are investigating the injury of the 2-year-old who had been in foster care since age 6 months because, according to Wayne County Family Court records, her parents were cocaine addicts and unable to provide a suitable home.



Allison Newman

Washtenaw County Medical Examiner Dr. Bader Cassin said the child died of a onetime catastrophic head injury and her body showed no other signs of abuse, but he is waiting for more information from police before concluding the death was an accident or a homicide.

Allison's court-appointed lawyer, Gregory Schueller, said he saw the child once or twice this year in the foster home of Carol and Alan Poole in Canton and everything appeared fine.

Carol Poole told police that Allison was injured last Thursday while playing, Canton Police Sgt. Rick Pomorski said. At 2 a.m. Friday, Carol Poole found the child unresponsive in bed, police said. Allison died at Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

The Pooles have not responded to messages for comment. They are licensed with Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, a private, nonprofit agency.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).

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Article published Sep 28, 2006

## Police still seeking answers in death of girl in foster care

BY CAROL MARSHALL  
STAFF WRITER

The Wayne County Medical Examiner's office has determined that 2-year-old Allison Newman died as the result of severe trauma to the head. What is still unknown is how it happened.

"The manner of death is considered open," Canton Police Sgt. Rick Pomorski said. "That means that the investigation continues."

Canton Police received the preliminary results of an autopsy Monday afternoon for Newman, who died Friday after emergency workers transported her from her Canton foster care home in the 2600 block of Emily Court. Her foster mother, who had been caring for Newman since January, called 9-1-1 when she found the little girl unconscious at about 2 a.m.

She was rushed to Annapolis Hospital, then airlifted to the University of Michigan Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

Friday afternoon, police were able to find the girl's birth father and bring him to Canton from the state prison in Jackson. The hospital was able to find the girl's birth mother, and both biological parents were at the hospital to give consent to disconnect life support. She died that afternoon, Pomorski said.

According to Pomorski, the girl sustained trauma on the back of her head.

"The (foster) mother's explanation is that her daughter is an active child, and often arches her back and throws her head back. She said she'll stand on her bed and fall down," Pomorski said. "Even though the mother said she didn't see her do it on that day, she'd seen her do it before. She said she thinks the girl hit her head on a bedpost."

The 40-year-old foster mother who had been caring for Newman has been cooperative in the investigation, and police are working to corroborate her statements.

"We're in direct contact with the medical examiner's office, pediatric neurologists, as well as other investigators," Pomorski said. "We're checking all leads, all information and all possibilities."

And that takes time.

"I can't allow for us to rush and make an uneducated decision," Pomorski said.

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## Jury finds Apley not guilty

STACY LANGLEY, The Huron Daily Tribune  
09/27/2006

**BAD AXE** — After more [Email to a friend](#) [Post a Comment](#) [Printer-friendly](#)

than an hour and a half spent deliberating Tuesday afternoon, a jury returned with a verdict of "not guilty" on charges of third degree criminal sexual conduct and extortion against Charles Apley of Bad Axe. Apley's attorney, Christopher Titus, said Tuesday about the verdict: "I think the jury realized the evidence just wasn't there.

" My client has maintained his innocence all along. A lot has been said about my client over these past few months and he's stuck by his innocence and the jury confirmed that today."

Huron County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Stephen J. Allen said Apley's defense attorney had contacted the prosecutor's office just a few days prior to the trial looking for a deal for his client.

Allen said Titus conveyed to his office that Apley would be willing to plead to a lesser charge of fourth degree criminal sexual conduct — which carries only a two year maximum prison sentence — if the charge of third degree criminal sexual conduct was dismissed.

"I felt there was just no way we could justify dropping it down to two years, in light of the fact he's a registered child

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**Taste of Home**  
cooking school

**The Marlette Leader**

molester. We were unwilling to do that," said Allen, who explained the difference between the charge of third degree criminal sexual conduct and fourth degree is that third degree is sexual touching with someone under the age of 13.

"There's still the sexual touching, but in fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct it is with someone over the age of 13," Allen said.

Another significant difference between third- and fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct is the possible penalty. Third-degree criminal sexual conduct carries a possible sentence of up to 15 years in prison, compared to the only two-year prison sentence for fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct.

After both sides were unable to come to some sort of a plea agreement late last week, the case went to trial on Tuesday starting in the morning with jury selection.

During the jury trial, only two people were called to the witness stand to testify: the alleged victim, an 11-year-old boy, and Det. Kevin Knoblock of the Bad Axe Police Department.

The boy was first to take the witness stand on Tuesday morning telling the jury he knew he was in court to "tell the truth about Chuck (Apley)."

During questioning of the boy he struggled to recall the details which he told Knoblock about an alleged incident when he stayed overnight and slept on the floor of Apley's Bad Axe apartment.

The boy told the jury his mother was in the kitchen cleaning up when her boyfriend, Charles Apley, woke him up by rubbing his body parts over the top of his clothing.

During a separate incident the boy described a time when he was sitting at the computer when Apley allegedly exposed

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himself to the boy and had the boy do the same after threatening to hit him.

Titus told the jury he felt the boy was motivated by the fact he didn't like Apley and didn't want Apley kissing his mother.

"Children tell stories, fabricate things, to get the results they want," said Titus

But as Titus questioned the boy, he told the jury he liked Apley until he "did that," referring to his allegations.

Titus also questioned the boy about his aunt Karen.

The boy said his aunt Karen didn't like Apley and didn't want him or his mom around Apley.

"Aunt Karen even told the boy 'bad things about Chuck' (Apley)," Titus said.

Det. Knoblock also took the witness stand telling about his investigation of the alleged incident that began on April 13 when he received a call from the Michigan State Police who turned in information they received from one of the boy's friends.

Knoblock said he questioned a few of the boy's friends about what he told them Apley did. He then questioned the boys' mothers, and the next day interviewed the boy about the allegations.

At 1 p.m. the jury heard all the evidence presented in the case against Apley. When the jury returned with their "not guilty verdict," Apley, who had been lodged in jail since April, was free to go.

As for the boy, Huron County Prosecutor Mark J. Gaertner said he's living in foster care and only has supervised visits with his mother and father.

"It was a combination of their parenting skills and allowing the boy to be around a registered sex offender (Apley) that he was removed from the mother's home," said Gaertner.

"The (Huron County Probate) court determined they (the boy's parents) were not an adequate safeguard for the child, and living with them he was at risk — both physical and mental...

"The court stated there will not be reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify the child with the parents because it will be detrimental to the child.

Gaertner said in cases like this one the matter is handled in probate court — to protect the child — and there's a criminal matter to deal with the accusations. "Where the criminal track was not fulfilled yesterday — and I respect the jury's decision — we have a fail-safe plan in place to protect the child.

"The little boy and others like him are protected no matter what," he said.

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## Mother arrested in case of bleach in bottle

Thursday, September 28, 2006

By Ken Kolker and John Agar

### The Grand Rapids Press

HASTINGS -- A mother whose 8-month-old daughter was sickened by bleach in her baby bottle was charged today with first-degree child abuse.

Jennifer Clement, 23, expressed frustration in raising her two children, court records show.

Clement also was scheduled for trial today in Barry County District Court for a marijuana possession charge, court officials said.

Bond was set at \$5,000 on the abuse charge, which carries a maximum 15-year prison sentence if convicted.

The baby, Belle Clement, was taken to Pennock Hospital for treatment Sept. 8 and later placed with Child Protective Services. Several ounces of a bleach solution were recovered from the baby's bottle, police said.

The incident occurred in Clement's home in the 400 block of West Mill Street, police said.

The baby and an older child now are in foster care.

The mother at first blamed her 3-year-old son, Christopher Anderson, telling authorities she believed he unlocked the child-proof cap on a bleach container and dumped it in the baby's bottle while she was outside, according to probate court records.

Clement allegedly told others her son is "evil, and probably poisoned his sister," the records show.

According to authorities, Clement also suggested an 18-year-old in her house might have poisoned the child.

"It is reasonable to assume that is not how Belle may have ingested bleach," a protective services worker said in court records.

Clement delayed calling 911 for an hour, records allege. Police said they smelled bleach in the baby's bottle, and in the home. A doctor who treated the baby detected bleach in the her vomit.

The children were "very dirty" and the house was filthy, protective services workers wrote.

The day before the incident, Clement allegedly told the 18-year-old she was overwhelmed. The 18-year-old "also found writings by Jennifer stating things like not being ready to have kids, needing a way out, and wishing it could be different," she told protective-services workers.

Protective services investigated Clement previously. In March, the two children were home alone when a social worker stopped by. The mother showed up seven or eight minutes later.

Clement also has made "false and exaggerated statements" regarding her children's care and legal issues, authorities said.

A Oct. 30 hearing is set in Barry County Probate Court to permanently remove the children from the mother.

The children have different fathers.

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## Bay City Times Live

**Thursday, September 28, 2006**

**Mio man faces criminal sexual conduct charge**

MIO – A 34-year-old Oscoda County man faces up to life in prison on a charge of first degree criminal sexual conduct involving a child under age 13.

James S. Teddy, of Mio, was arraigned Wednesday in Oscoda County District Court. Police said Teddy remains free pending further court proceedings after posting 10 percent of a \$10,000 bond.

Police said the charge is based on an investigation of sexual misconduct that allegedly occurred in August in Comins Township.

The Oscoda County Sheriff's Department said in a prepared statement that the agency is not releasing any other information about the case.

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## Wife accused of attempting to kill spouse with her car

Woman to stand trial; police say she was reacting to news of husband leaving her

Daily Tribune Staff Writer

HAZEL PARK -- A Junction City, Kansas, woman was ordered to trial Tuesday following her preliminary examination for attempted murder.

The case, and two companion charges, stem from a Sept. 4 incident on John R near West Elza, where Tina Monique Plummer-Nelson allegedly drove a 2003 Ford Taurus over the sidewalk, chasing and injuring her husband, Mark Anthony Nelson, 41, of Detroit.

Plummer-Nelson, 38, will face arraignment Oct. 3 before Oakland County Circuit Judge Colleen A. O'Brien. Plummer-Nelson is free on \$10,000 bond.

The victim told police he ran several blocks, in circles, and climbed fences while trying to avoid getting hit. Police found the victim, cut and bruised, on the sidewalk. He refused treatment despite appearing to be in pain while having difficulty walking, police reports said.

The alleged attack occurred after Nelson allegedly told his wife he was leaving her, police reports said.

Besides assault with intent to commit murder, Plummer-Nelson also is charged with assault with intent to commit great bodily harm less than murder, and assault with a dangerous weapon.

Contact John Michalak at [john.michalak@dailytribune.com](mailto:john.michalak@dailytribune.com) or 248-591-2521.

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## Flint woman pleads to voluntary manslaughter in boyfriend's stabbing death

**FLINT**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Thursday, September 28, 2006

**By Paul Janczewski**

**JOURNAL STAFF WRITER**

FLINT - A Flint woman accused of stabbing her boyfriend to death in June pleaded no contest Tuesday to voluntary manslaughter.

Felicia K. Thornton, 47, faces an Oct. 18 sentencing before Genesee Circuit Judge Geoffrey L. Neithercut.

Thornton was charged with second-degree murder in the June 3 stabbing death of her boyfriend, Anthony Holmes, 42, of Flint, at the Evergreen Regency apartments off Lippincott Boulevard.

That charged carried a penalty of up to life in prison. Manslaughter is a 15-year felony.

Assistant Genesee County Prosecutor Kennan M. Dewitt said the victim's family was notified of the plea deal and agreed with it.

Thornton will be required to pay restitution for Holmes' funeral expenses and any counseling the family had because of his slaying.

Three witnesses, including Thornton's daughter, testified at an earlier hearing that Holmes and Thornton were arguing about 7:30 a.m. and they began hitting each other.

At some point, Thornton produced a knife and stabbed Holmes, cutting his jugular vein and other major arteries, officials said.

- Paul Janczewski

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Free book program continues to expand

Thursday, September 28, 2006

By **PATTI BRANDT**

**TIMES WRITER**

It starts with "The Little Engine that Could," by Watty Piper and ends five years later with "Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come," by Nancy Carlson.

It's the Imagination Library, a program that aims to put new books in the hands of every child from birth to 5 years old in Bay and Arenac counties.

Children like 21-month-old Jalyn Bentley, who follows along while her 8-year-old brother Quentin Sanchez reads to her.

"My daughter loves to read," said mom Brandy Sanchez. "And it's all due to the fact that she loves these books."

More than 200 people on Wednesday celebrated the success of the Imagination Library program at the Doubletree hotel and conference center. The program, administered by the Bay-Arenac ISD, in the last 18 months has put books in the hands of 4,200 children.

Through the program - started in 1996 by country singer Dolly Parton - children get an age-appropriate book every month from birth to age five. The books come in the mail and are free to all children, no matter what their household income.

The books are purchased locally and Parton pays the shipping costs.

The program is funded by donations and so far about \$880,000 has been raised locally, according to Michael R. Dewey, superintendent of the Bay-Arenac ISD. But the goal is to raise a total of \$4 million, an amount that would, through an endowment fund, buy books forever.

"Many of our parents in this community ... their kids don't have dreams," Dewey said. "We help them create a dream."

Dewey said there are about 7,300 children in the Bay Area that qualify for the free books.

Noel Eichhorn, a retired educator who sits on the local Imagination Library advisory board, says literacy is her passion.

But to appreciate the impact of literacy on a community, one must first think about the impact of illiteracy, Eichhorn told Wednesday's crowd.

Research shows that people who can't read end up unemployed or underemployed, dependent on community services, in prison and perpetuating illiteracy by creating generation after generation of non-readers, Eichhorn said.

It also shows that children who are read to at home from a young age develop fundamental reading skills, have better vocabularies, learn beginning phonics, have better comprehension of reading material, and - perhaps most importantly - develop a love of books and reading.

"These children love reading and love books and if you love reading you read more. And if you read more you read better," Eichhorn said.

Federal No Child Left Behind legislation, passed in 2001, says that all children should be reading on grade level by the third grade. If they aren't, research says they will probably never catch up.

Eichhorn was instrumental in starting the 20 Minutes a Day! reading program in Bay County seven years ago, which encourages parents to read to their children for 20 minutes every day from birth.

Whether programs like Imagination Library and 20 Minutes a Day! are having an impact on literacy in the Bay Area is something that has so far been difficult to assess and measure. But a new program that tests the pre-literacy skills of all of the Bay City school district's incoming kindergartners may be a tool to do just that, Eichhorn said.

The program, paid for by the Parent Involvement and Education grant from the Michigan Department of Education, can track those skills over time, she said.

But involving families is the key.

"Make sure that everyone you know and love is signed up for Imagination Library," Eichhorn said. "We must get books into our homes."

- Patti Brandt covers Bay County schools for The Times. She can be reached at 894-9673 or by e-mail at [pbrandt@bc-times.com](mailto:pbrandt@bc-times.com).

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Health-care issue will not go away

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Last week, the Kalamazoo Gazette published two stories -- one about this area's free health-care clinics being overwhelmed, and the other about a national organization pushing for nationwide health coverage.

The stories, of course, are related. Of all the affluent nations in the world, the United States stands alone in not making affordable health care available to all of its citizens.

For a half-century citizens 65 and older have been covered by Medicare, although this program -- funded by tax dollars and individual payments -- covers less than half the cost of hospital and doctor bills. Seniors without supplemental private insurance face financially catastrophic medical expenses.

Along with Medicare in the 1960s came Medicaid, which provides treatment for people who have reached the poverty level.

Without these two government programs, countless millions of Americans would face financial catastrophe.

Yet, on the local and area scenes, free health clinics are being inundated by patients seeking help. Last week, the Free Clinics of Michigan held its second annual work day at the First Presbyterian Church Health Clinic in downtown Kalamazoo.

"Free health clinics used to be the safety net below the safety net," remarked Sister Mary Ellen Howard, director of the Cabrini Clinic in Detroit and coordinator of FCOM. "The problem today is the safety net is in tatters, and a lot of people are falling through. Free clinics are being overwhelmed."

There are 40 free clinics in the state. They see about 7,500 patients each month. Even though doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists and others donate their time, the number of people seeking help is rising dramatically. One key reason for this is employers either have eliminated health insurance benefits or placed more of the financial burden on employees.

A series in The Detroit News this week detailed how health care costs are strangling General Motors Corp., which last year spent \$5.3 billion on health care for its employees and retirees. Of course, that's a cost that is passed on to people who buy GM vehicles -- an average of \$1,525 per car or truck.

It's clear U.S. companies must get their health care costs under control. It's a matter of survival.

A national health care system for people of all ages -- especially if it's funded entirely by government -- would have to overcome major political obstacles.

Meanwhile, the number of people under 65 without health insurance, in the tens of millions, continues to grow.

The Citizens' Health Care Working Group, created by Congress in 2003 when it approved a prescription drug benefit program under Medicare, has found that most Americans want universal protection against huge medical expenses, and guaranteed insurance coverage for periodic examinations and treatment.

When will this be accomplished and how will it be financed? Those are daunting questions. We need to agree on some answers.

Right now, there is agreement on one fact: The enormous health-care problem in our nation isn't going away.

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Article published Sep 28, 2006

Group targets infant mortality

**Elizabeth Huff**

*The Enquirer*

Four children under the age of 1 have died this year in Calhoun County due to accidental suffocation from sleeping in unsafe environments.

"Any infant death from sleep asphyxiation can be prevented," said Rick Tsoumas, member of the Maternal & Infant Health Commission.

In Calhoun County the total number of infant deaths is higher than the state average from 2001 to 2004, according to Michigan Department of Community Health Vital Statistics.

In 2004, there were 9.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in Calhoun County. The rate was 7.6 in Michigan and 6.6 in the United States for the same year.

Accidental suffocation is not the only cause of infant death, but it is preventable, according to Lauren Rocho, member of the Infant Safe Sleep Coalition, a subset of the Maternal & Infant Health Commission.

"We can decrease (the infant-mortality rate) a little bit if we can create safe sleep environments," she said. "It could decrease by as much as 25 percent."

County health leaders met Wednesday at the Family Health Center to introduce an initiative by the year-old Infant Safe Sleep Coalition to educate the community.

Josh Lessig, 28, said when he was a baby he slept on his stomach.

"They told my mother then to let me sleep on my stomach," said Lessig of Battle Creek. "It's interesting to see how it has changed."

Lessig, now the father of 5-month-old daughter Reese, listens to the advice of medical professionals that say to let babies sleep on their backs and on a firm surface.

If left on a couch, a baby could easily slip between the cushions. Parents also are told not to let their children sleep beside them.

While blankets and stuffed animals can be cute, they should be kept out of the baby's sleeping area, the Coalition recommends.

Thamary Troncoso, 34, learned that lesson after her first son was left to sleep with a blanket in his crib. He became "lost" in the pile of blankets — his face and body completely covered — and she was scared.

"He was OK, but that made me realize that that could be dangerous," said Troncoso, of Battle Creek.

Infant Safe Sleep Coalition plans to organize educational events for the community. They have already given away 75 portable playpens to parents who cannot afford to buy a crib.

Mary Adkins, program director of the statewide Tomorrow's Child, said education is key to preventing accidental deaths from unsafe sleeping environments.

"When you know better, you do better," she said. "We know better now."

*Elizabeth Huff is a health and features reporter. She can be reached at 966-0684 or [ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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Lansing State Journal

September 24, 2006

## **Family to Family resource fair Oct. 2 in Charlotte**

Family to Family is an initiative by the Eaton County Department of Human Services. It fosters partnerships between birth families, foster parents, community members, service providers and the DHS office to improve safety plans, placement and services to children.

The program focuses on keeping children in their communities, schools and with their siblings. There will be a resource fair on Oct. 2 from 8:30 - 10:30 a.m. at Eaton Intermediate School District, 1790 E. Packard Hwy., Charlotte. There will be guest speakers, networking and resources and a breakfast buffet.

# Youth groups take homelessness challenge

By Mardi Suhs, Cadillac News

CADILLAC - Last year thirty area junior and high school-age students took a challenge from their church leaders to experience what it means to be homeless.

Saturday, youth groups from three area churches will repeat that experiment by setting up makeshift tents and cardboard shelters to spend the night in the Cadillac City Park.

Judeen Houston, a chaperone last year for the Manton United Methodist Church, said the night had an impact on the kids in her group.

“On the way home my kids said they appreciated a warm bed. It was 34 degrees last year.”

In addition, discussions on the homeless raised the student's awareness.

“By talking with Pastor Craig Harris, they learned that homeless people don't look like the typical homeless. Some of them are living in a home with other people.”

The event, sponsored by Love Inc., is not only a night of raising awareness, it is an opportunity for the youth to raise money for the homeless, both here and for orphans in Nigeria.

“The kids have gotten pledges from family and friends,” explained Love Inc. director Diane Wood. “Half of the money raised goes to Love Inc. to help with homelessness. The other half goes with Dr. Verbrugge to help stock the shelves of an orphanage in Nigeria.”

Last year the group raised about \$740.

Glenn Verbrugge travels to Nigeria every January to teach doctors surgical procedures. While there he visits an orphanage.

“He noticed that their cupboards are sparse,” Wood continued. “There's barely enough food for the children, so he will be taking the money to help stock their shelves.”

The event will start at 8 p.m. Saturday and dismiss Sunday morning at 8 a.m. Participating youth groups are from the Manton United Methodist Church, the Cadillac United Methodist Church and the Cadillac Seventh Day Adventist Church.

To help with pledges for the youth, call Diane Wood at 779-3175.

[news@cadillacnews.com](mailto:news@cadillacnews.com) | 775-NEWS (6397)



## Fathers demand joint custody

Thursday, September 28, 2006

By Sharon Emery

Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- Michigan fathers who believe they've been worked over by the courts on child custody are among backers of a bill that would mandate joint physical custody unless there is convincing evidence that a parent is unfit, unwilling or unable to hold up his end of the bargain.

Currently the starting point for determining custody is the child's best interest. But some fathers say that puts them at a disadvantage because family courts are biased toward women and, as child-bearers, women usually already have the child under their care.

"So Dad has the burden of having to fight for any kind of parenting time or custody," said William Reisdorf, an attorney from Troy and a member of Dads of Michigan, a fathers' rights group.

He was among about 100 people, mostly men, rallying at the Capitol Wednesday to support HB 5267, sponsored by Rep. Leslie Mortimer, R-Horton. Mortimer, who as a child saw her father only every other Sunday after her parents divorced, says she's been promised a public hearing on the bill this fall.

But advocates for women say mandating joint custody would put the father's interests above the child's and turn custody proceedings into mud-slinging affairs. Women might avoid divorce, even when the family is in a desperate situation.

"We have to make sure families are not pressured into joint custody," said Kathy Hagenian, of the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, who noted that batterers often use children to manipulate their partners in custody disputes.

"Joint custody could be used to further traumatize the child," she said, and make threats and manipulation "much more effective."

Other opponents of the bill include the Family Law Section of the State Bar and the Michigan Conference of the National Organization for Women. They pointed to California, which in 1994 repealed its mandatory joint custody law, and New York, which has failed to move a similar bill, as evidence of widespread misgivings about the move.

The legislation would affect only those cases where custody is disputed, about 5 percent of the cases, according to Kent Weichman, of the Family Law Section of the State Bar. Since 1980 Michigan judges have been required to consider joint custody when a parent requests it.

"Under this bill, one parent would have to be found unfit by the courts in order to have any kind of custody arrangement other than 50-50," Weichman said. Ultimately, "the bill prohibits the court from considering what's best for children ... by imposing one solution on all families."

Supporters of the legislation, including Fathers-4-Justice, Moms of Michigan and the Children's Rights Council, argued in a statement that Michigan families are "being micromanaged by the family court system with disastrous consequences to our children, families and the state economy."

They say the bill would result in a presumption of joint custody for fit parents, adding that equal parenting is a civil rights issue "whose time has come."

Opponents disputed the notion of court bias in favor of women, noting that in 50 percent to 75 percent of custody disputes women lose.

Some see a financial motive in mandating 50-50 custody, noting that one parent, often the mother, usually ends up providing most of the care even when the court specifies otherwise.

"This will eliminate child support -- there won't be any support orders," said Renee Beeker, president of the Michigan Conference of the National Organization for Women.

Contact Sharon Emery at (517) 487-8888 x236 or e-mail her at [semery@boothnewspapers.com](mailto:semery@boothnewspapers.com).  
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Michigan Report

September 27, 2006

## **CUSTODY BILL CAUSES WIDE RIFT,** **SPECULATION AMONG ADVOCACY** **GROUPS**

Legislation that would assume equal parenting time in child custody decisions provoked appearances from two groups on Wednesday that held very different views about what the bill would do to family law practices. One group wants to stop the bill that they say would give rights to parents who are unfit, while proponents of the bill said the legislation would simply even out the playing field for all parents, creating an incentive for each side to work together in the best interest of the child.

To head off a rally by proponents of the bill planned for the afternoon, the State Bar of Michigan Family Law Section, Michigan Conference of the National Organization of Women and the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board gathered earlier to urge the public and legislators to oppose [HB 5267](#) ■, expected to be taken up in committee soon after lawmakers return to session after the election.

The bill, sponsored by [Rep. Leslie Mortimer](#) (R-Horton), who was a child of divorced parents, would mandate that judges award 50-50 joint custody in divorce proceedings, except in cases where parents choose a different arrangement or when one parent is found unfit.

"My parents divorced when I was five and I saw my father every other Sunday. Do you think that's right?" she said.

Ken Weichman, from the State Bar, said his group doesn't oppose joint custody in all cases – just the assumption that equal custody is appropriate in every case.

The current system, he said, focuses on what is in the best interest of the child, "and this bill prohibits that. If this bill passed, then even if 50-50 custody were harmful to the children, the court still would have to order it."

Not true, said Gary Naeyaert, spokesperson for DADS of Michigan, one of four groups that sponsored a rally in support of the bill on Wednesday afternoon.

"There is no one size fits all solution, but we are looking at what fits most," he said.

He said in cases where one parent is abusive or in any other way unfit to raise children, the court could find them so and choose not to grant shared custody.

However, the majority of fathers represented by DADS and groups like it want the option of continuing the same type of relationship with their children that they had during their marriage, Mr. Naeyaert said.

Unfortunately the law now often grants the custodial parent 85 percent custody and 15 percent visitation to the non-custodial parent, usually the father.

That's a misperception, said Renee Beeker, president of Michigan NOW. "Women are not winning custody battles; they are gaining custody by mutually agreed upon arrangements. In about 55 percent of the contested custody cases, women lose," she said.

The opposition to the bill said creating a fitness test for custody would increase litigation costs for divorcing couples and traumatize children as parents "mudsling" back and forth trying to prove unfitness.

However, said James Semerad, president of DADS, this legislation would actually create an incentive to negotiate what is best for the children by mandating that a judge can't override whatever agreement parents come to, a problem that occurs now.

For parents who can't agree, they would each start off on an even playing field, without either assuming he or she won't have to negotiate because full custody is assumed, he said.

However, in order for joint custody to work or for parents to be able to agree on an arrangement in the first place, they have to be willing and able to cooperate, which certainly isn't the case in the 40 percent to 60 percent of unresolved custody cases that involve domestic abuse, said Kathy Hagenian, vice president of public policy for the Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Her group worries that abusive partners could use the 50-50 custody presumption as leverage to keep an abused spouse from leaving the relationship out of fear of losing his or her children.

The arguments surrounding the issue aren't new: both groups have spoken up about similar legislation when it has been introduced in previous years when it died in committee.

Most expect the bill to make an appearance this fall in front of the House Family and Children Services committee, the chair of which, [Rep. John Stahl](#) (R-North Branch) spoke at the rally and is "warm" to the bill, said Mr. Naeyaert.

# LMC gets boost from contract

## But Michigan Works! decision hurts Area Agency on Aging

By ANN BURCH  
H-P Correspondent

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College has been awarded a \$4 million Workforce Development contract with Michigan Works! to provide employment training and placement to area job seekers.

The three-year contract creates a partnership between the three-county work force development organization and LMC. The \$3.8 million contract is effective Sunday. Final negotiations may bring the college an additional \$ 200,000, said LMC President Randall Miller.

“This is an extremely important step into a direction which will prepare the region’s work force, both educationally and economically, for current and future jobs,” Miller said.

“This will allow the college to create a framework with Michigan Works! clients by giving them the necessary training to make sure they become job ready.”

Preparing Southwest Michigan workers for jobs is the primary function of Michigan Works! It’s a nonprofit agency governed by a board of community members from Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties. The organization is in a network of 25 statewide agencies that get state and federal contracts to provide work force development services. This is the first time the three-county Michigan Works! has awarded a service contract to a

single contractor to provide a “seamless” entry system for some of its programs, which includes Work First, Dislocated Worker and Youth and Adult Employment.

The new contract replaces contracts held by the Region IV Area Agency on Aging in St. Joseph and the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District in Cass County.

Losing the contract will put more than 15 people out of work as of Saturday and in search of the very services they assisted the public with over the years.

“We’re disappointed,” said Lynn Kellogg, CEO of the Area Agency on Aging. “We have been an impeccable contractor for over 20 years. But we knew Michigan Works! was consolidating services (under one contractor), where one takes all.”

Kellogg said the agency is working with its employees to find jobs within the agency or through Michigan Works! and LMC. The workers staffed five service centers and satellite offices in the three counties.

“We are working with our staff to make the transition as smooth as possible,” said Kellogg, who said the agency still has the senior employment program through the Older Americans Act for the three counties.

A call to the Cass ISD was not returned. The school district provided work force development services through the Youth Employment Program. No information could be obtained on the number of ISD employees affected by the loss of the contract.

The “One Stop Center” concept for job seekers and employers will reduce program

administrative costs by consolidating all programs under one umbrella, leaving more money for service delivery, said Candice Elders, community relations manager with Michigan Works!

More focus will be placed on the region's labor market and the needs of business and industry, Elders said. Efforts will be made to match an employer's need with a trained work force.

"We want to create a pipeline of employees for high-growth industries," Elders said.

"Seventy percent of the region's employers are high-growth industries. They are health care, hospitality, advanced manufacturing and skill trades."

LMC has a health care program, which includes the newly opened Nursing Center on its Napier Avenue campus. The college's hospitality program, which focuses on the lodging and food service industries, will introduce a class during the winter semester on casino management at its Bertrand Crossing campus near Niles.

The Bertrand Crossing and M-TEC building in Benton Harbor offer a range of manufacturing technology training programs, including plastics. A pre-GED program and testing center are at M-TEC.

LMC's South Haven campus will house the Michigan Works! satellite office, moving from the city.

"The only area (from the four high-growth industries) we don't have is the building and construction trades," said Bob Harrison, executive dean of M TEC and Bertrand Crossing campuses, as well as dean of community and business services and occupational studies.

"But we are already working on partnering with some of other institutions which provide those trainings."

Harrison, overseeing LMC's work force contract, said the college will hire between 40 and 45 people to staff the Michigan Works! offices in Benton Harbor, Dowagiac, Paw Paw, South Haven and Buchanan. Interviews are under way, and the college has taken applications from those who worked for the previous contractors, Harrison said.

## **Five MWAs Get JET Funding**

MIRS, Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Five Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs) received \$1.17 million for the Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) Pilot Program.

The JET Pilot Program is a partnership between the Department of Human Services (DHS), the MWAs and the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) to help people get off of Welfare and into the workforce. The JET Pilot Program has fewer restrictions than Work First and was designed to give the MWAs more flexibility in providing services to public assistance recipients.

"The Jobs, Education and Training approach fundamentally changes the way we move families off welfare and toward self-sufficiency," said DHS Director Marianne **UDOW**. "Instead of telling welfare recipients to 'get a job, any job,' the program supports them in developing job skills that help them move out of poverty."



## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### New rules put states under gun

Thursday, September 28, 2006

By Michelle Miron

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The goal is set for Michigan's welfare system for each of the next two fiscal years.

At stake is millions of dollars in federal funding.

Beginning Oct. 1 the state must move at least half of its 42,800 adult welfare recipients into the work force, enroll them in job training programs or get them doing community-service work or lose nearly \$38 million as early as 2009.

A new nationwide emphasis on state welfare-to-work programs, put into place by the Bush administration with the goal of further self-sufficiency for welfare recipients, sets a higher work standard for individual adults who receive benefits through any state.

The standards are set even higher for two-parent families who receive welfare benefits.

Ninety percent of them must work, perform volunteer community-service work, or get into job training in order to get assistance.

If a state can't meet the goals, it could lose federal funding.

"Obviously the work required is going to be a little bit of a stretch," said Robert Straits, director of the Kalamazoo/St. Joseph branch of Michigan Works. "So many of the jobs in Michigan have gone, for people who don't have a lot of skills. If the goal was that 50 percent (of recipients) must be working in a bona fide job, it would be totally unrealistic. But they've narrowed down the pool and given them alternatives ... and that is realistic."

He said it's difficult to estimate how many additional Kalamazoo County households will need to start work or provide community service under the changes, since the categories of those excused from working have changed substantially. As a result, a greater number of those with health problems, mental illness, substance addictions or other problems may be pre-screened into seeking help with other agencies instead of becoming part of the worker pool, he said.

County residents most affected by the changes will be those who haven't worked in the past because they lack the skills or training for even basic, entry-level jobs, he said. County recipients enrolled in the Family Independence Program, the most costly form of welfare in Michigan, numbered 2,021 in August.

Jean Kimmel, an associate professor of economics at Western Michigan University, said she questions whether a significant number of additional recipients will find jobs in Michigan's beleaguered economy -- and whether the effort will financially burden the agencies trying to meet the new goals.

"I think they're getting to the least-employable people, so it will be difficult for a lot of these individuals to get and keep jobs," Kimmel said. "Requiring people to work on very, very little education runs in contradiction to studies showing that we (in Michigan) need higher-skilled workers."

"Service agencies ... are also going to need more money to get people into jobs," she said. "And from the taxpayers' standpoint that's just not cost-effective."

Straits said Michigan Works, the state-funded agency offering employment and training programs through

100 Michigan offices, will need to beef up its local volunteer programs for qualified recipients. And setting up such volunteer opportunities is not as cheap and easy as it sounds, he said, since the workers still require qualified supervision.

The budget for the local Michigan Works has actually been reduced for the next fiscal year, he said, presumably so that more money can go into assessing and screening recipients.

Aiding Kalamazoo will be its current strength in opportunities to volunteer or conduct job training, he said. Volunteer work is offered in supervised settings at places such as Goodwill Industries, through the Greater Kalamazoo United Way and Kalamazoo's Parks Department. State-funded job training is already conducted through venues that include community colleges, the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research and the Michigan Works Service Center, he said.

``Hopefully the economy will pick up and there will be less reliance on these kinds of activities," he said. ``A job is still ultimately the goal."

Michigan has been identified as one of 24 states lagging in welfare-to-work efforts. An estimated 11,500 individuals, or 117 percent more, will need to find work or train a minimum number of hours to meet the new guidelines, according to a Gazette News Service report.

During the 2004-05 fiscal year, a monthly average of 1,708 families in Kalamazoo County received assistance through the federal- and state-funded Family Independence Program, according to the Michigan Department of Human Services. That amounted to \$9 million worth of assistance.

It's not clear how many families were working at that time. But Kalamazoo County and St. Joseph County now exceed the current state requirements for working benefit recipients, Straits said.

Current requirements call for 25 percent of single-parent households and 36 percent of dual-parent households to work or train. In general, Straits said, about 47 percent of local, custodial or noncustodial single-parent households in Kalamazoo County -- and about 44 percent of such single-parent households -- already meet the requirements.

A representative of the Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services, the local administrator for welfare, deferred comment to Maureen Sorbet, a spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Human Services. Sorbet had no information on how the new law will affect Kalamazoo County but said there's no reason to believe Kalamazoo -- and the rest of the state -- can't meet the new requirements.

Experts report that 23 percent of all Michigan welfare recipients will qualify to work under the new standards.

``Many folks on public assistance have multiple problems," Straits said. ``It's not always as simple as just matching people up with a job or community activity. ... We can't put them in (the work force) until they've dealt with their other issues."

Those receiving benefits can also meet the new work requirement by pursuing GEDs or high school diplomas (teen parents only) or by searching for jobs (for six weeks). Single parents are expected to work a minimum of 20 or 30 hours per week depending on whether their children are under age 6, while two-parent families need to work a minimum of 35 or 44 hours per week depending on whether they use daycare.

In Michigan, the Family Independence Program allots food stamps, Medicaid coverage and cash assistance for families with children. A family of three receives about \$489 per month.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### What's changing with welfare

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Old standards: 25 percent of single-parent households and 36 percent of dual-parent households must work, search for work, or volunteer.

New standards: an average of 50 percent of qualified adult welfare recipients must find paid or volunteer work over the next fiscal year. 90 percent is the standard in two-parent families. However, additional categories have been added for those unable to work.

Who's working:

n The number of Michigan households on welfare that are working or volunteering: about 9,844

n The additional number that will need to work or volunteer next fiscal year: 11,500.

Source: Kalamazoo/St. Joseph branch

of Michigan Works

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September 28, 2006

## DeVos focuses on the big picture

Critics say challenger's initiatives lack specifics

**Charlie Cain and Mark Hornbeck / Detroit News Lansing Bureau**

When Dick DeVos is pressed for details about his vision for Michigan, he inevitably refers to the 65-page, full-color magazine put out by his campaign three months ago entitled "The Michigan Turnaround Plan."

It includes tax breaks for the poor, bonuses for effective teachers, a phase-out of welfare benefits after four years and reform of state financing of colleges and universities.

This week, DeVos also called for campaign finance reforms to limit special interest influence on lawmakers and other elected officials, including a ban on tickets and trips paid by lobbyists for government officials.

But the centerpiece of his main 134-point blueprint is a call to eliminate the Single Business Tax, which already has been accomplished by the state Legislature. Lawmakers voted in August to scrap the state's main corporate tax by 2008.

Critics, including Gov. Jennifer Granholm, ask: Now what?

DeVos says the state should replace most of the \$1.9 billion in revenue generated by the corporate tax, but he won't specify how much. He doesn't want a sales tax on services or any other shift of the burden to individuals to succeed the soon-to-be ended business levy, but he doesn't pinpoint what he will support -- other than possibly some kind of tax on business profits or gross receipts.

Democrats say the turnaround plan, which has been distributed to 15,000 people and downloaded from the campaign Web site by 50,000, is "pictures and platitudes," adding that Michigan voters deserve to know more before Election Day.

"His so-called action steps are laughable and leave the reader baffled on what action is and how it will be executed," said Michigan Democratic Party Chairman Mark Brewer, who estimated the cost of DeVos' proposals would be in the billions of dollars.

John Truscott, spokesman for DeVos, retorts: "It's more specific than any of the governor's State of the State addresses."

The DeVos campaign sent a letter Tuesday to the state treasurer seeking details about how seven different taxation approaches would affect various businesses as he tries to figure out what tax rate would be needed to replace most of the SBT revenue. But DeVos won't offer anything further before the election, Truscott said, because he wants to review the reply and study the tax models in surrounding states -- so whatever Michigan devises doesn't put it at a competitive disadvantage.

For her part, Granholm says she wanted to scuttle the Single Business Tax too -- but not before a replacement scheme is worked out. Her own business tax reform proposal -- which would have lowered the SBT rate and paid for it by raising levies on insurance companies -- was soundly rejected by the Republican-dominated Legislature more than a year ago. She has not offered a new strategy for replacing the Single Business Tax.

Democrats chide that proposals DeVos has unveiled in recent weeks are similarly lacking in detail.

For example, his senior citizen plan proposed last month calls for: keeping seniors safe; working to make prescription drugs more affordable; making energy more affordable for seniors; and creating a sustainable long-term care system.

The plan doesn't offer specifics on how these goals would be accomplished and financed.

An agriculture platform released in July would: cut red tape and taxes for farmers; give agriculture industry leaders a seat at the table; help market Michigan farm products; and support alternative fuels.

DeVos acknowledged in a recent interview with The Detroit News that his plans for the state are not meant to provide all the answers up front. Rather, they're big picture proposals to be fleshed out when he assumes the office.

"We view this very much as a live document," he said of his turnaround plan. "As circumstances and facts change and new opportunities present themselves, we want to be loading in those opportunities, ideas and solutions."

Some say DeVos isn't in a position to provide specifics.

Gary Wolfram, an economics professor at Hillsdale College and deputy treasurer under former Gov. John Engler, said a challenger doesn't have the resources available to make detailed tax proposals.

"It is impossible to figure out what a replacement tax should look like without determining what is politically acceptable as well as what is economically efficient," Wolfram said in an opinion column published in The News.

"This requires close work with the Legislature, tax committees of organizations, academic economists, tax attorneys, accountants, firms and individuals."

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**  
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September 28, 2006

**Letter****Shorting indigent counsel hurts Michigan**

Oakland County is not alone in its struggle to deal with the broken indigent defense system ("Court-assigned lawyers urge county to up fees," Sept. 8). Across the state, Michigan is defaulting on its constitutional obligation to provide high-quality legal counsel to every resident accused of a crime.

Each and every citizen of Michigan who pays taxes loses, because it costs far more to operate a broken system than an effective one. Those costs come in the form of appeals, incarceration costs, and worst of all, wrongful conviction settlements.

Michigan taxpayers recently shelled out a reported \$4 million to repay the family and attorneys of Eddie Joe Lloyd, who spent 17 years in prison after being wrongfully convicted of rape and murder. Lloyd was represented by a court-appointed attorney from a system that was broken, that lacked the resources to provide a fair defense. A fully resourced indigent defense system would help ensure that tax dollars are being used where they are most needed -- not diverted to pay for mistakes caused by the broken system.

*Jill Leslie Price*

*President*

*Criminal Defense Attorneys*

*of Michigan*

*Ann Arbor*

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# GRAND TRAVERSE HERALD

A weekly community newspaper covering Traverse City and its adjacent townships

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09/27/2006

## Program provides pains of poverty

### Participants struggle with bills, long lines, health care issues at simulation workshop

**By Carol South**  
Herald contributing writer

Mulling over whether to pawn her wedding ring for cash, "Emily Epperman," 30, sifted through her meager assets Monday afternoon.

Trying to manage two troublesome teenaged children, one struggling with drugs, and raise money for food stretched Epperman's patience and ingenuity during Monday afternoon's Poverty Simulation seminar. Sommer Grant, an employee of Cherryland Electric Co-op, portrayed Epperman during the second session of the Poverty Simulation Workshop.

Held at the First Congregational Church, the event drew 103 community members who lived through four ten-minute weeks as a person in poverty. They struggled to feed their families, obtain a "Bridge Over Troubled Water" card, pay bills, find housing and move around "town" — which was the church's Fellowship Hall.

"I hear this all the time but it's definitely interesting to experience it," said Stephanie Dommer, an employee of the Coalition Health Access Program attending the afternoon workshop. "It's definitely been an eye-opening experience."

Managing the anxiety and seemingly endless brick walls encountered while trying to accomplish tasks were also enlightening for participants.

"You learn how frustrating it is going through this situation," said Renee Louvierre Mitchell, a volunteer coordinator for the Northern Michigan Alliance for Independent Living who participated in the morning workshop. "I found where I could see gaps in services and looked for any way to fill them."

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The Grand Traverse Herald is inserted into the home-delivered Traverse City Record-Eagle within Traverse City itself and the townships that immediately adjoin the city. It also is available in newsracks around town.

The information provided on the Internet is only a portion of what appears in the print edition.

The Poverty Reduction Initiative sponsored the workshops, which were facilitated by staff from the Michigan State University Extension office in Newyago County. The event's mission was to raise awareness of the obstacles and challenges facing poor individuals and families.

"This is just a tool that simulates poverty, they put a lot of work into it so that it is realistic," said Claudette Byers of MSU Extension in Newyago County, who led the event and has navigated the public assistance maze three times in her life. "For four weeks, we're going to experience lines, not being able to get your business done."

Stations lining the perimeter of the Fellowship Hall held volunteers portraying everyone from Department of Human Services employees, a school teacher, pawn shop owners, food bank volunteers, bank employees, grocery store managers and utility employees.

Participants were plagued by lack of proper identification and transportation, short hours at agencies and businesses, surly employees and too much to do in too little time.

"It was very, very helpful in terms of experiencing the everyday chaos that most of us never have been exposed to," said Tom Emling, an employee of Michigan State University working in community partners, who portrayed an 82-year-old grandmother.

In the scenario, Emling had a sick, frail husband to care for and a stack of errands to run to keep the household going. Just getting out the door was a problem because of the husband's health problems and their lack of transportation. When the couple finally reached the bank to get money, their ID was insufficient. Later in the scenario, they were robbed.

"We didn't even have the basic elements of transportation," he noted, adding of the workshop: "This was wonderful, can we do this workshop for the public in our immediate five-county area?"

The mission of the Poverty Reduction Initiative, a collaborative community effort, is to reduce poverty by 25 percent in the region by 2010. Founded in 2004, the group has held periodic Saturday Special events covering topics ranging from nutrition to finance to taxes. Members include local businesses, human service agencies and citizens, who work together to reduce poverty.

The Poverty Reduction Initiative will hold another Saturday Special event with a Job Survivor theme on Saturday, November 4, at the TBA-ISD Career Tech Center from 9 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. For more information or to register by the October 27 deadline, call 922-3754. For more information about the Poverty Reduction Initiative, see the website [www.traversebayPRI.org](http://www.traversebayPRI.org).

[Go to the Record-Eagle home page](#)

Send your questions and comments to: [Editor Garret Leiva](#)

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from the Midland Daily News

09/27/2006

## **Department of Human Services phone number changing**

Due to the installation of a new telephone system, the telephone numbers for the Midland County Department of Human Services will be changing effective Friday, Sept. 29.

The new main number will be (989) 835-7040. The new Children's Protective Services number will be (989) 835-7303.

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